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SUBJECT: NSA JONES DISCUSSES DEMOCRACY AT THE IEC

¶1. On June 23, National Security Advisor James Jones attended an elections roundtable at the Independent Election Commission (IEC). Participants included the Ambassador, Ambassador Carney, IEC Chairman Dr. Azizullah Lodin and three other commissioners, IEC Chief Electoral Officer Dr. Daoud Najafi, UN Development Program (UNDP) Elect Chief Electoral Advisor Margie Cook, Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) Chairman Grant Kippen, Commissioner Fahim Hakim, and many supporting members of the organizations. Dr. Lodin chaired the roundtable, which concluded with Jones emphasizing to the media that the United States impartially supports the choices of the Afghan people, and that Ambassador Eikenberry's meetings with candidates is in line with implementing the President's policy.

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Elections are the Lifeblood of Democracy  
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¶2. Lodin opened the event by remarking that elections are the lifeblood of a democracy and critical to the future of Afghanistan, applauding Jones' visit at this important time. Noting the progress made by the IEC since its formation in 2007, he asserted that now the IEC is a lead actor in strengthening the democratic process in Afghanistan. He thanked the international community, particularly the UNDP, for its support and affirmed the IEC would do its best to provide a good election to the Afghan people.

¶3. Jones applauded the IEC and ECC on their efforts, commenting that the world pays attention to elections and will be watching on August 20. He assured the IEC that the United States and the international community support its efforts to provide the credible, inclusive and secure election to which the Afghan people are entitled, noting logistical obstacles should not prevent a process worthy of Afghanistan's proud history or bright future. Jones stated that the elections also present the Afghan people with a tremendous opportunity to make their voices heard and show their leaders the way forward for the country. It is also a chance for Afghan electoral institutions to demonstrate their effectiveness and credibility.

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Supporting the choice of the Afghan People  
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¶4. After brief presentations from the ECC on their operations and from the IEC on the current status of election planning, the event opened to questions from the press. Jones reiterated the importance of supporting fair and credible elections that reflect the will of the Afghan people and that the United States neither supports nor opposes any legitimate candidate, but encourages a level playing field for all candidates. He noted that the U.S. wants to support stability and legitimate government in Afghanistan and will work with the chosen leader of the Afghan people. In response to a question about the Ambassador's meetings with leading opposition candidates, Jones noted that the meetings were consistent with U.S. policy to allow voters access to candidates and media, and

that it is consistent with how the U.S. approaches elections in other nations.

15. This message has not been cleared by the party.  
EIKENBERRY